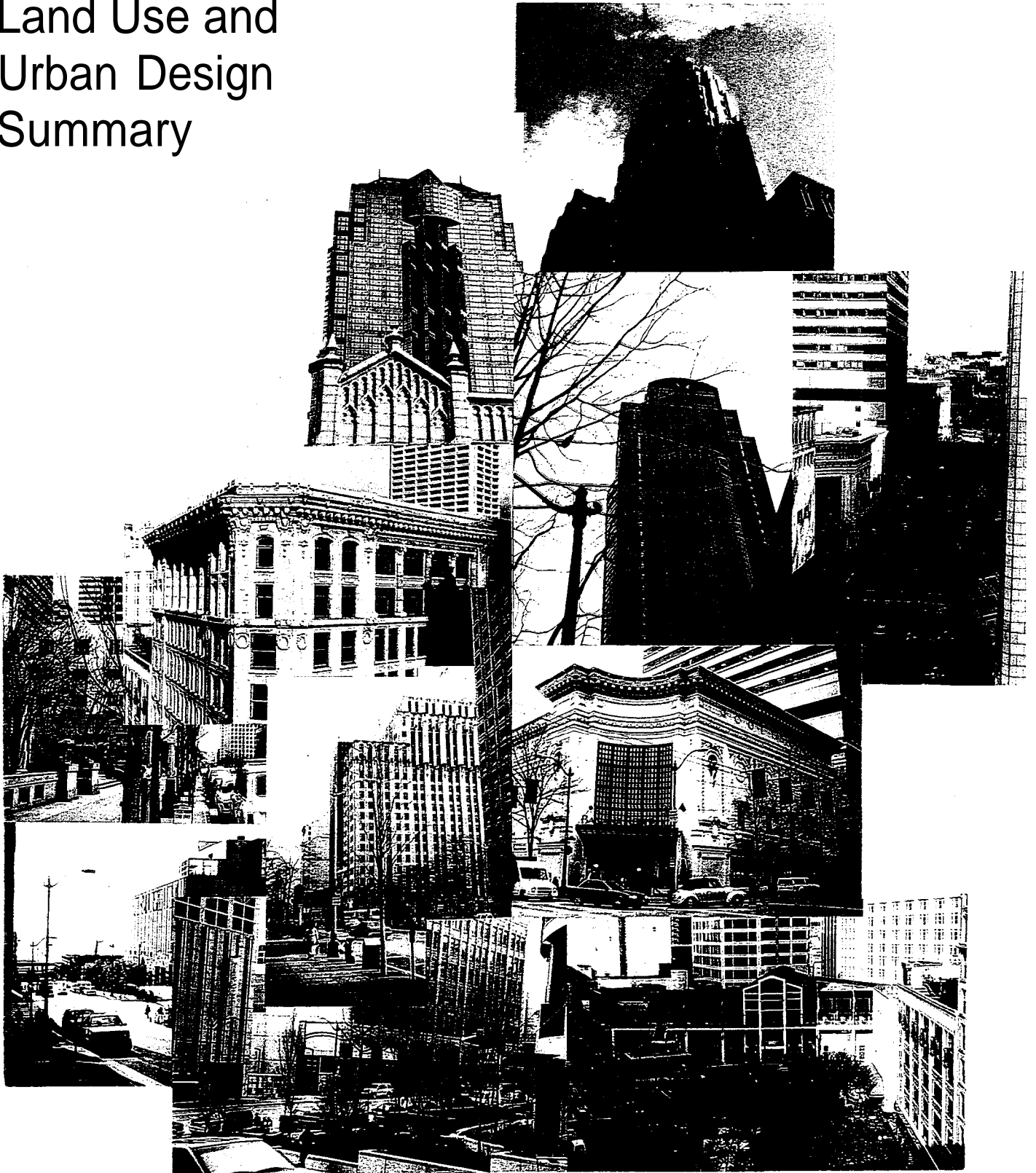


# Seattle Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan

## Land Use and Urban Design Summary



February 1999

# Seattle Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan

## Presentation Summary

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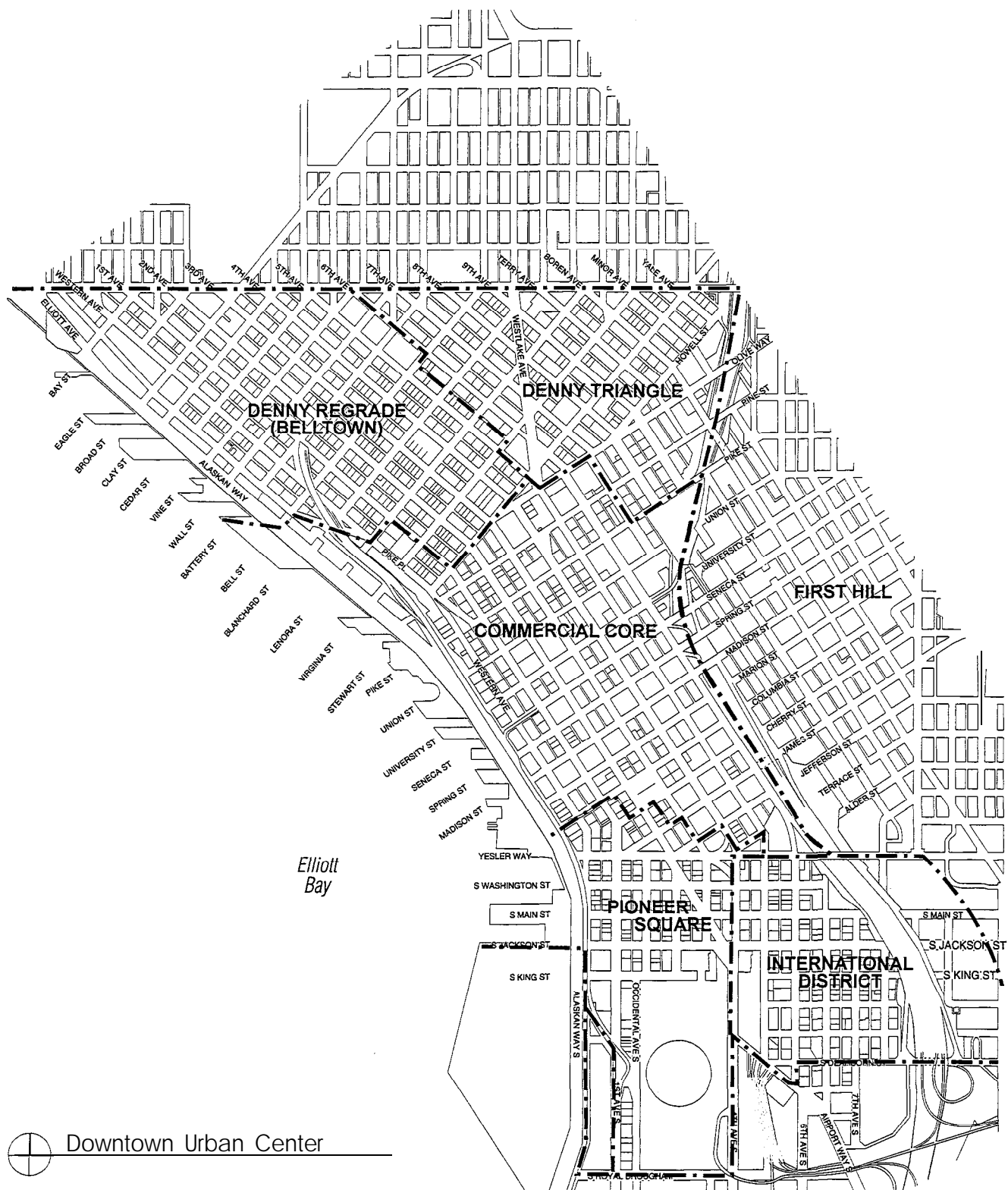
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# Vision

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“The Commercial Core is a major employment center, a lively tourist and convention attraction, a strong shopping magnet, a thriving residential center, and a regional cultural and entertainment hub. The Commercial Core’s unique neighborhood identity reflects its role as the heart of Seattle’s Downtown Urban Center.”

— *Commercial Core Planning Committee*



*The Commercial Core is the central neighborhood of the Downtown Urban Center.*

# Purpose and Context

## Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan

Seattle’s neighborhood planning program stemmed from the state’s Growth Management Act (GMA), passed by the Washington State Legislature in 1990. The GMA required Washington communities to plan for their growth over the next twenty years. In response to this mandate, the Seattle City Council adopted *Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan: Toward a Sustainable Seattle* (Comprehensive Plan) in 1994.

The Comprehensive Plan proposed to concentrate future growth within thirty-seven of the city’s existing neighborhoods and to support that growth with complementary new programs in housing, open space, transportation, and human services. To carry out this mission, the City of Seattle developed a neighborhood planning process that provided neighborhoods with City funding and staff support. **The City then directed each neighborhood to create community visions, address geographically-specific problems and opportunities, and produce plans for implementing the Comprehensive Plan growth targets.**

The Comprehensive Plan established a Downtown Urban Center and further designated five urban center villages within the urban center: Denny Triangle, Denny Regrade (Belltown), Commercial Core (including the central waterfront), Pioneer Square, and International District. For each neighborhood, the Comprehensive Plan established specific job and housing growth targets. The Comprehensive Plan’s growth targets for the Commercial Core are:

Existing Jobs	New Jobs Target	SF of New Building @ 275 SF/Job	Existing Housing Units	New Housing Units Target	SF of New Building @ 600 SF/Unit
107,000	27,000	7,400,000	2,800	1,365	2,300,000

## Downtown Urban Center Plan

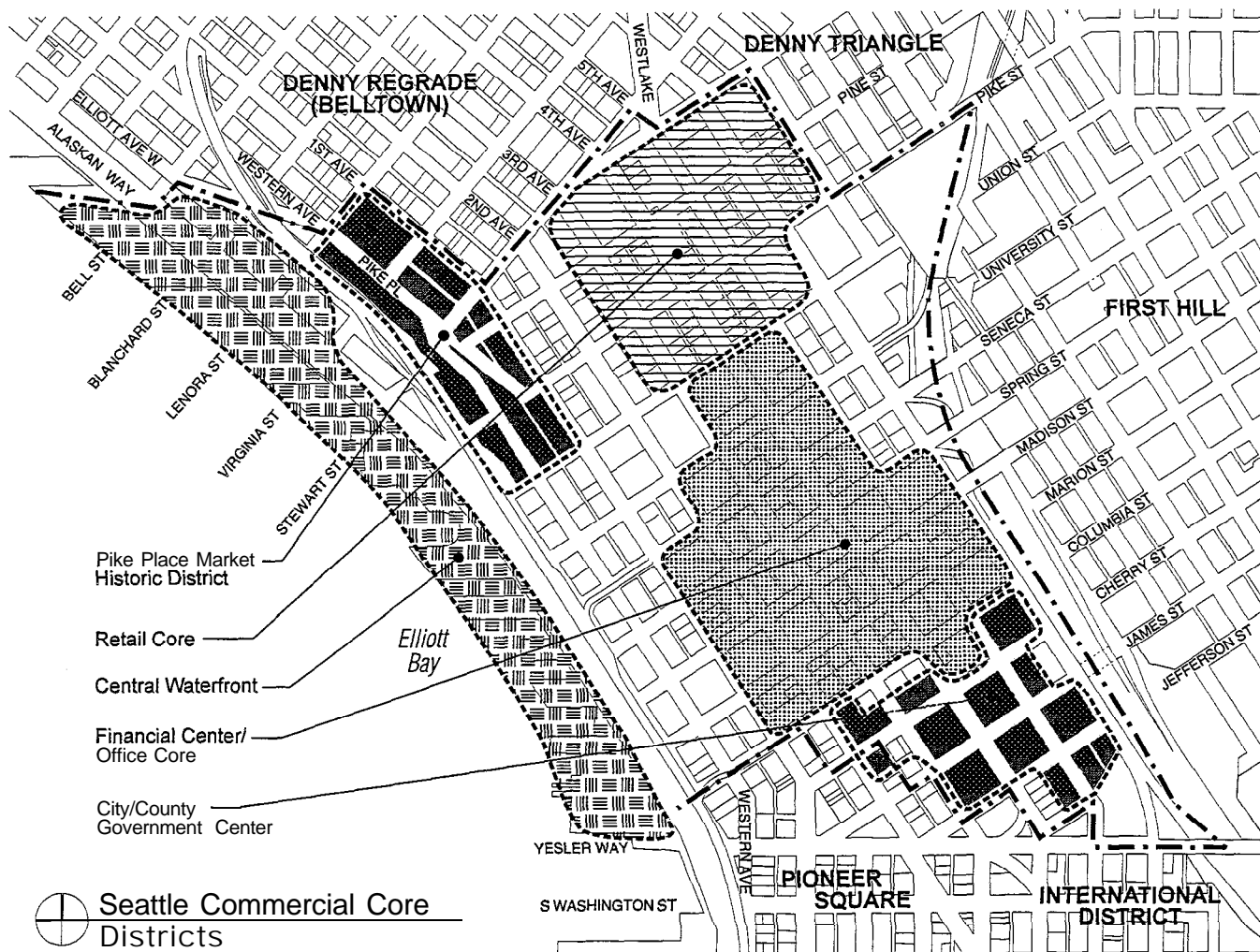
The Downtown Urban Center Plan contains recommendations that pertain to all the downtown neighborhoods, including the Commercial Core. Recommendations for addressing downtown-wide housing, transportation, and human service needs in the Commercial Core and the other downtown neighborhoods are enumerated in the more broadly based Downtown Urban Center Plan.

# Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan

The scope of this plan is significant. The Commercial Core is downtown's largest and most developed neighborhood. The Commercial Core contains the Seattle's Retail Core, Financial Center/Office Core, City and County government centers, Central Waterfront, and Pike Place Market Historic District.

## Special Planning Issues

As envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan, the Commercial Core will contain approximately 60% of the Downtown Urban Center's jobs (+134,000 jobs) by the year 2014. Implementation of the Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan will generate between \$1.7 and \$2 billion of new private investment plus significant public investment. Commercial Core workers alone will spend between \$250 and \$300 million annually on downtown retail and other services. The Commercial Core's commercial and retail businesses contribute several billion dollars to the economy each year. The Commercial Core is a vital component of both Seattle and the Puget Sound region and it sets the vision of Seattle as seen by much of the world.



The goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to concentrate future growth in areas with the capacity and infrastructure to support that growth. By gracefully accommodating growth, the Commercial Core can not only enrich its urban qualities but contribute to the region by absorbing growth that may be destructive elsewhere. This plan outlines the implementation elements of a strategy for meeting these objectives.

## Making Capacity Usable

The growth targets for the Commercial Core reflect significant increases in both employment (+25%) and housing (+46%). The combined effect of these targets will be the construction of approximately 7.4 million square feet of new building space for job production and 2.3 million square feet of housing. A 1998 development capacity survey estimated that the Commercial Core has adequate zoned capacity for housing production, but is approximately one-half million square feet short of the capacity needed to meet its job targets

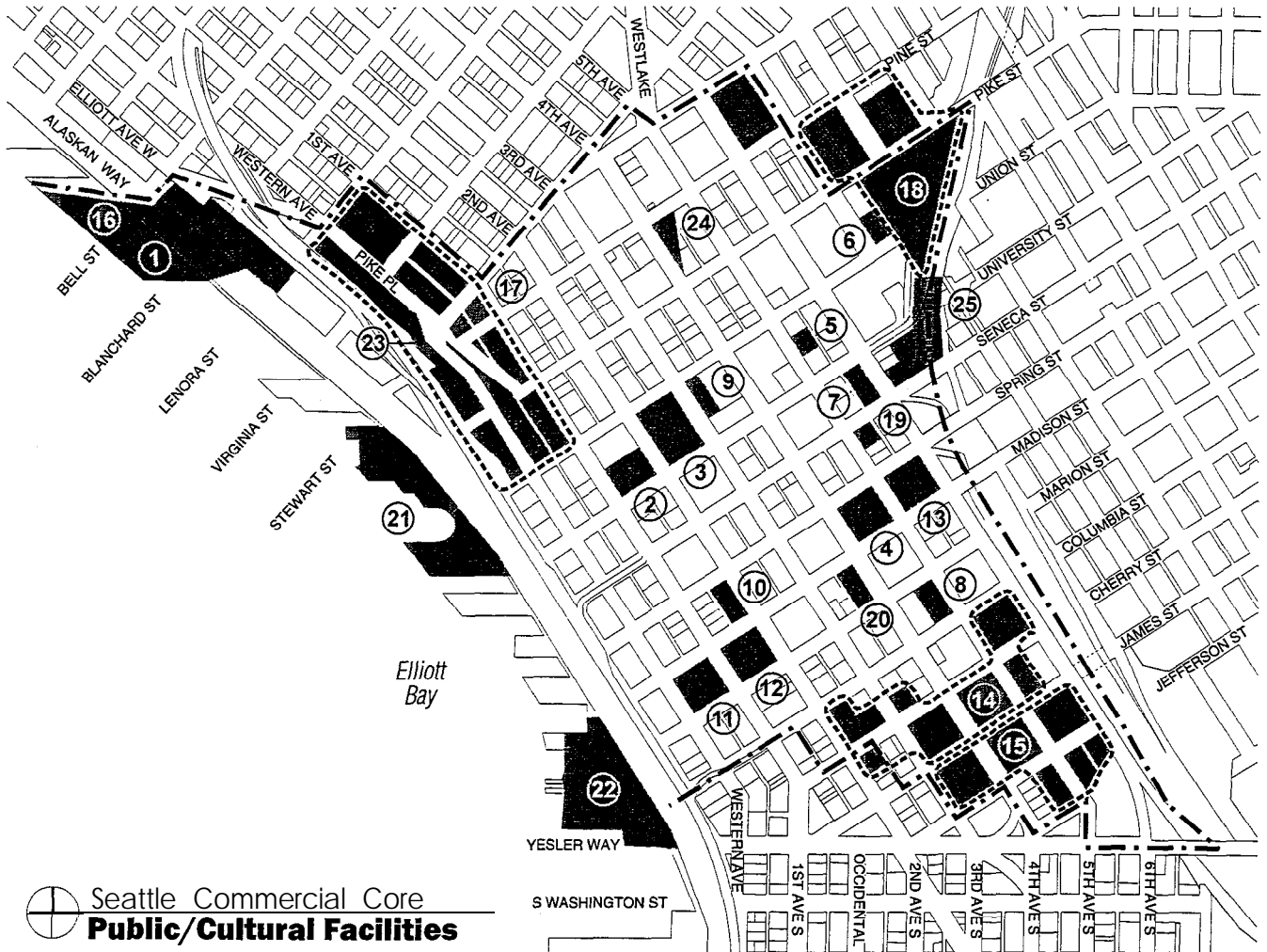
In reality, the Commercial Core may be more than one-half million square feet short of meeting job capacity. Capacity estimates reflect the area's "potential" development capacity, not its actual capacity. Some sites will not develop, some are too small to be developed economically, and some have historic structures or other characteristics that make their redevelopment undesirable. If the Commercial Core is to meet its growth targets, innovative and practical ways must be found to transfer capacity from these sites to the core's remaining development sites. **The Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan presents a strategy for making development capacity usable.**

## Simplifying the System

Seattle's existing zoning, bonus, and development rights transfer systems are extremely complicated. The process for calculating a site's maximum building capacity can encounter as many as three dozen different zoning standards and public benefit calculation procedures. This system needs to be simplified and its features integrated to reflect the needs and priorities of the neighborhood. **The Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan recommends ways to both simplify the system and define bonus items that develop public benefit features that respond to the neighborhood's goals and objectives.**

## Addressing Future Needs

As the Commercial Core neighborhood develops, it will become more focused as an employment, residential, retail, and tourist center. As the area changes and develops, it will be critical that its streets, open spaces, and new buildings be designed to support a growing and active Commercial Core.



Seattle Commercial Core  
**Public/Cultural Facilities**

**Cultural Resources**

- 1 Odyssey Maritime Museum (Pier 66)
- 2 Seattle Art Museum
- 3 Benaroya Hall
- 4 Seattle Public Library
- 5 5th Avenue Theater
- 6 ACT Theater

**Religious Institutions**

- 7 Plymouth Congregational Church
- 8 First United Methodist Church

**Governmental Facilities**

- 9 U.S. Post Office
- 10 Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco
- 11 Federal Office Building
- 12 Henry M. Jackson Building
- 13 U.S. Court House
- 14 Seattle Civic Center
- 15 King County Administration Center

**Public Facilities**

- 16 Port of Seattle (Pier 69)
- 17 Pike Place Public Market
- 18 Washington State Convention and Trade Center
- 19 Seattle YWCA
- 20 Seattle YMCA

**Parks**

- 21 Seattle Aquarium and Waterfront Park (Pier 58)
- 22 Washington State Ferry Terminal (Pier 52)
- 23 Victor Steinbrueck Park
- 24 Westlake Park
- 25 Freeway Park

# Goals and Policies

The following language will be adopted into the Comprehensive Plan.

## Goals

**G1:** A major employment center, tourist and convention attraction, shopping magnet, residential neighborhood, and regional hub of cultural and entertainment activities.

**G2:** A unique neighborhood identity for the Commercial Core.

## Policies

**P1:** Explore revising land use codes, public benefit bonuses and incentive programs to stimulate desirable development and support neighborhood goals.

**P2:** Encourage variety in architectural character and building scale.

**P3:** Strive to maintain the neighborhood's historic, cultural and visual resources.

**P4:** Seek to provide housing affordable to households with a range of income levels.

**P5:** Guide development and capital projects throughout the entire downtown area through development of a unified urban design strategy that provides a vision for new public facilities, waterfront connections, pedestrian environments, transit linkages and open spaces.

**P6:** Strive to take advantage of opportunities to develop new public open space and encourage development of a system of connected green spaces and open areas.

**P7:** Use Green Streets and open space as a means to improve urban design character and provide amenities that support growth.

**P8:** Seek to improve the cleanliness and safety of streets and public spaces.

**P9:** Seek to improve the pedestrian qualities of streets and public spaces.

**P10:** Seek to enhance pedestrian connections between the Commercial Core and other neighborhoods.

**PI 1:** Work with transit providers to promote convenient transit and public access to and through the Commercial Core.

**P12:** Seek opportunities to improve mobility throughout the Commercial Core.

**P13:** Seek to increase coordination among downtown human services providers.